ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- Funding Opportunity Title: Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s): 11.457, Chesapeake Bay Studies, Fisheries Research
- Dates: Full proposals must be received by 5 p.m. eastern time on December 1, 2003.
- **Application Submission:** - Electronic submission online:

http://www.grants.gov/

- Paper submission: Derek M. Orner, NOAA

Chesapeake

Bay Office, 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403

Funding Opportunity Description: The Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program is a competitively based program that supports research, monitoring, modeling and management addressing various aspects of Chesapeake Bay fisheries. The Chesapeake Bay is a complex and dynamic ecosystem that supports many fisheries that are economically important both regionally and nationally. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office established the Fisheries Steering Committee in 2001 to guide various Chesapeake Bay fisheries' issues including management and research in an ecosystem context. Funded projects foster our knowledge and understanding of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem by: (1) providing biological information and life history characteristics for many individual Chesapeake Bay fisheries stocks, and (2) broadening the multispecies knowledge base for development of Fisheries Ecosystem Planning. All projects supported through this program will address recommendations of the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/fisheries) and provide timely (real-time)

information for making resource management decisions in an ecosystem context.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office's (NCBO) Fisheries Research Program was established in 1985 with the development of the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee. The Stock Assessment Committee planned and reviewed Baywide resource assessments, coordinated relevant actions of state and Federal agencies, reported on fisheries status and trends and selected and reviewed research projects, mainly in a single species context. The Program has evolved in recent years to incorporate ecosystem-based research, monitoring and modeling as the basis for informed management decisions within Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program is a competitively based program that supports research, monitoring, modeling and management addressing various aspects of Chesapeake Bay fisheries. The Chesapeake Bay is a complex and dynamic ecosystem that supports many fisheries that are economically important both regionally and nationally. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office established the Fisheries Steering Committee in 2001 to guide various Chesapeake Bay fisheries' issues including management and research in an ecosystem context. Funded projects foster our knowledge and understanding of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem by: (1) providing biological information and life history characteristics for many individual Chesapeake Bay fisheries stocks, and (2) by broadening the multispecies knowledge base for development of Fisheries Ecosystem Planning. All projects supported through this program will address recommendations of the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/fisheries) and provide timely (real-time) information for making resource management decisions in an ecosystem context.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals should address at least one of the two areas of interest: (1) Stock assessment research and management; or, (2) Multispecies research, management and implementation.

1. Stock assessment research

The NCBO seeks proposals for projects that provide data and information addressing stock assessment research and management in Chesapeake Bay. The production and consumption of fish and shellfish has historically been vital to the economic and social well-being of the Chesapeake Bay. However, effective

management of the fishery resources depends upon the quality of the information in addition to environmental, economic, sociological and political considerations. Proposals submitted under this area should address one of the following elements:

- a. Assessments of the abundance, productivity, distribution and exploitation patterns of important Chesapeake Bay finfish and shellfish resources: Proposals may include research on life history characteristics, larval dynamics, stock-recruitment relationships, schedules of vital rates, and descriptions of stock structure, demographics and spatial distribution. Development of techniques to better accommodate incomplete and variable data and to show the risks of various management options associated with the uncertainties inherent in current models would also be appropriate.
- b. <u>Identification and quantification of technical interactions (i.e. bycatch) in Chesapeake Bay commercial and recreational fisheries:</u> Technical interactions (i.e. bycatch) arise from the mix of species caught in single gears or single-species fisheries. They occur in many Bay fisheries and remain undocumented. Proposals should evaluate the nature of the technical interations and the levels of removal and mortality attributable to such interactions.
- c. <u>Development and/or Implementation of a coordinated fisheries data</u> <u>management system for Chesapeake Bay:</u> A Baywide, coordinated data management system is essential for proper and timely management of fishery resources in Chesapeake Bay. Development and implementation of a truly integrated and complete on-line fisheries data system is essential. This system must be readily available to managers, scientists and stakeholders. Proposals should be designed in coordination with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) and the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP).

2. <u>Multispecies Research, Management and Fisheries Ecosystem Plan</u> Implementation

The NCBO seeks proposals for projects that provide information on the knowledge base of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. The Chesapeake Bay is a complex and dynamic ecosystem that supports many fisheries that are economically important both regionally and nationally. To date, these resources have been managed on a single species basis. While the single species approach has served us well, the existence of both biological and technical (by-catch) interactions in most Chesapeake Bay fisheries point to the need to move toward a wider, multispecies perspective. The ultimate objective of this research and monitoring is to lead to the development of ecosystem-based management for Chesapeake Bay fisheries, within which the sustainable exploitation of individual species can be determined.

Proposals submitted under this area should address any of the following elements:

a. <u>Fishery-Independent surveys:</u> Plan, develop and conduct coordinated Baywide surveys to regularly estimate species abundances, trends and biological characteristics (e.g. age/size structure, recruitment, growth and mortality rates, food habits) for economically and ecologically important key species. Proposals within this

task should: (1) review and assess existing fishery independent sampling programs conducted by regional agencies to evaluate their potential applicability to the Chesapeake Bay; (2) conduct a fishery-independent survey that may include multiple gears, such as benthic and midwater trawls and hydroacoustics to characterize the status and trends in the abundance, distribution and characteristics of key finfish and shellfish; and, (3) provide for the submission of reports incorporating monitoring raw data and associated metadata within a time frame agreed to by the applicant and the NCBO. The time frame is negotiable, but is strongly suggested to be no longer than 2 months from the time that the data is collected. Data must be provided in electronic format. Prior to any public dissemination of the data by the NCBO within 12 months of receipt, the NCBO will consult with the recipient to assure proper quality control and assurances.

- b. Retrospective analyses: Document and quantify multispecies interactions among economically and ecologically important finfish and shellfish within the Chesapeake Bay. Proposals should lead to the identification of 'strong' interactions within the Chesapeake Bay fisheries system. Work may involve analysis of commercial and recreational catch and effort data, the analysis of patterns of diets and energy flows within the fisheries system or multivariate analyses of abundance relationships within the fisheries system and their relationship to environmental and habitat characteristics.
- c. <u>Ecosystem modeling</u>: Apply and assess alternative multispecies fisheries models to the Chesapeake Bay fisheries systems. Proposals should detail the development of a multispeices or ecosystem model focusing on core Chesapeake Bay species. Model approaches should seek to predict constraints and patterns in the fisheries production of the Chesapeake Bay system.
- d. Ecosystem Understanding: In an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, it is important to understand the relationships between fisheries, the ecosystem, society, and the environment: Proposals submitted under this priority may include: (1) Development of Baywide reference points related to total removals of the system to fully appreciate the impact those fishery removals have on food webs. All sources of removals to quantify the level of total removals to the Chesapeake Bay system should be identified and threshold and sustainable levels of removals should be identified. (2) Conduct of field investigations to determine and quantify major predator-prey interactions and significant sources of food and mortality. (3) Improve understanding of the multiple pathways by which habitat degradation and restoration can affect managed species and members of their significant food web. (4) Determine how the spatial arrangement of habitats influences their value to managed species and members of their significant food web.

C. Program Authority

The Secretary is authorized under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended, at 16 U.S.C. 661, to provide assistance to, and cooperate with, Federal, State, and public or private agencies and organizations in the development, protection, rearing, and stocking of all species of wildlife, resources thereof, and their habitat, in controlling losses of the same from disease or other causes, and in minimizing

damages from overabundant species.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that approximately \$1.5M may be available in FY 2004 in award amounts to be determined by the proposals and available funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program.

It is the intent of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office to renew funding for several projects currently being supported and to make awards with funding through this notice to these programs pending successful review of a new application package, and adequate progress reports and/or site visits.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made.

B. Project/Award Period

Proposals may be considered eligible for renewal beyond the first project period. Proposals may be submitted for up to 3 years. However, funds will be made available for only a 12-month award period and any renewal of the award period will depend on submission of a successful proposal subject to merit review, adequate progress on previous award(s), and available funding to renew the award. No assurance for a funding renewal exists; funding will be at the complete discretion of NOAA.

Projects that plan on renewal must include in their first-year submission a full description of the activities and budget for the first year as described in this announcement, and a summary description of the proposed work and estimated budget by line item for each subsequent year.

If selected for funding, the applicant will be required to submit a proposal each subsequent year by the deadline announced in the following competitive cycle. In addition to the requirements for new proposals, renewal projects should include the accomplishments to date on the previous year's grant in their subsequent grant submissions.

C. Type of funding instrument

Under this solicitation, NCBO will fund Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research

Projects as 12 month cooperative agreements. The cooperative agreement has been determined to be the appropriate funding instrument because of the substantial involvement of NCBO in:

- 1. Developing program research priorities;
- 2. Evaluating the performance of the program for effectiveness in meeting regional goals for Chesapeake Bay stock assessments and in meeting the objectives of the Chesapeake Bay Fishery Ecosystem plan;
 - 3. Monitoring the progress of each funded project;
 - 4. Holding periodic workshops with investigators; and
- 5. Working with recipients to prepare annual reports summarizing current accomplishments of the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, state, local and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice.

The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in undeserved areas. The NCBO encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program, however, the NCBO strongly encourages applicants applying for either area of interest to share as much of the costs of the award as possible. Funds from other Federal awards may not be considered matching funds. The nature of the contribution (cash versus in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration in the review process. Priority selection will be given to proposals that propose cash rather than in-kind contributions.

IV. <u>Application and Submission Information</u>

1. Address to Request Application Package

Electronic application packages are available at: http://www.grants.gov/
Paper applications are available on the NCBO Fisheries website:
http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/fisheries or can be obtained by contacting Derek Orner,
NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403,

or by phone at 410-267-5676, or fax to 410-267-5666, or via internet at derek.orner@noaa.gov.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically through http://www.grants.gov, however, you may also submit your application to NOAA in paper format.

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirement by the deadline of December 1, 2003. Failure to follow these requirements will result in proposals being returned without review.

Applications for project funding must be complete and must follow the format described in this document. Applicants must identify the specific research priority or priorities to which they are responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list first on the application the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposals. For applications containing more than one project, each project component must be identified individually using the format specified in this section. If an application is not in response to a priority, it should so state. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NCBO as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

Hard copy or paper applications must not be bound and must be one-sided. Applicants are required to submit 1 signed original and 2 copies of the full proposal. All incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant.

Applicants must submit the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424), Budget Information, Non-construction Programs (SF-424A), and the Assurances, Nonconstruction Programs (SF424B) during initial submission of the application. The Department of Commerce Form(s) CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other responsibility Matters; Drug Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying, and if applicable Department of Commerce Form(s) CD-346 Applicant for Funding Assistance (Non-Profits, For-Profits, and Individuals) and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities SF-LLL, will be required during the final review process.

Proposal format must be in at least a 10-point font and double-spaced. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are not included in the 15-page limitation. Appendices may be included but must not exceed a total of 15-pages in length. Appendices may include information such as curriculum, resumes, and/or letters of endorsement. Additional informational material will be disregarded. Proposals must include the following information:

- a. <u>Project summary (1-page limit)</u>: It is recommended that each proposal contain a summary of no more than one page that provides the following:
 - (1) Organization title.
 - (2) Address, telephone number, and email address of applicant.
 - (3) Area of interest for which you are applying (see section I. B.).
 - (4) Project title.

- (5) Project duration (1, 2 or 3 years and beginning to end dates starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month).
 - (6) Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
 - (7) Project objectives.
 - (8) Summary of work to be performed.
 - (9) Total Federal funds requested.
- (10) Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources, if any. Specify whether contributions are cash or in-kind.
 - (11) Total project cost.
- b. <u>Project description (15-page limit)</u>: Each project must be completely and accurately described. The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should include: specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance; relation to longer-term goals of the Pl's project; and relation to other work planned, anticipated, or underway through Federal assistance. Each project must be described as follows:
- (1) <u>Identification of problem(s)</u>: Describe the specific problem(s) or area(s) of interest to be addressed (see section I.B. above).
- (2) <u>Project objectives</u>: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why", and; attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.
- (3) <u>Project narrative</u>: The project narrative is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished during each budget period of the project. This description must include the specific methodologies, by project job activity, proposed for accomplishing the proposal's objective(s).

Investigators submitting proposals in response to this announcement are strongly encouraged to develop inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary research teams in the form of single, integrated proposals or as individual proposals that are clearly linked together. The project narrative must include a milestone table that summarizes the procedures/objectives that are to be attained in each project month covered. Table format should follow sequential month rather than calendar month (i.e. Project period Month 1, Month 2... versus October, November...).

- (4) <u>Benefits or results expected</u>: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities.
- (5) <u>Need for Government financial assistance</u>: Demonstrate the need for assistance. Explain why other funding sources cannot fund all the proposed work. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.
- (6) Federal, state and local government activities: List any programs (Federal, state, or local government or activities, including Sea Grant, state Coastal Zone Management Programs, NOAA Oyster Disease Research Program, the state/Federal Chesapeake Bay Program, etc.) this project would affect and describe the relationship between the project and those plans or activities.
- (7) <u>Project management</u>: Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Include resumes of principal investigators. List all persons directly

employed by the applicant who will be involved with the project. If a consultant and/or subcontractor is selected prior to application submission, include the name and qualifications of the consultant and/or subcontractor and the process used for selection.

- (8) Results from prior NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office support: If any PI or co-PI identified on the project has received support from the NCBO in the past 5 years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided:
 - (a) The NOAA award number, amount and period of support;
 - (b) The title of the project;
- (c) Summary of the results of the completed work, including, for a research project, any contribution to the development of human resources in science/biology;
- (d) Publications resulting from the award (Reprints may be submitted, and are requested, for documentation if applicable);
- (e) Brief description of available data, samples, physical collections and other related research products not described elsewhere; and
- (f) If the proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.
- (9) <u>Monitoring of project performance</u>: Identify who will participate in monitoring the project.
- (10) <u>Project impacts</u>: Describe how these products or services will be made available to the fisheries and management communities.
- (11) <u>Education and outreach</u>: How will this project provide a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nations' natural resources?
- (12) <u>Evaluation of project</u>: The applicant is required to provide an evaluation of project accomplishments and progress towards the project objectives and performance measures at the end of each funding period and in the final report. The application must describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to determine technical feasibility, or to quantify the results of the project in promoting increased production, product quality and safety, plant survival, or other measurable factors.
- c. <u>Total project costs and budget narrative</u>: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and include contributions and donations.

Explain the calculations and provide a narrative to support specific items or activities, such as personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, and indirect costs. The budget detail and narrative submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on all required forms. Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness. Please Note the following funding restrictions:

-Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

d. <u>Supporting documentation</u>: Provide any required documents and any additional information necessary or useful to the description of the project. The amount of information given in this section will depend on the type of project proposed, but should be no more than 15 pages. The applicant should present any information that would emphasize the value of the project in terms of the significance of the problems addressed. Without such information, the merits of the project may not be fully understood, or the value of the project may be underestimated. The absence of adequate supporting documentation may cause reviewers to question assertions made in describing the project and may result in lower ranking of the project. Information presented in this section should be clearly referenced in the project description.

3. Electronic Submission

You may access the electronic grant application for the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program at http://www.grants.gov. Please note that applicants must locate the downloadable application package for this program by the CFDA number (11.457). Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application package and associated proposal information identified in Section IV.2, Content and Form of Application Submission, via the Grants.gov site. Applicants must submit the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424), Budget Information, Non-construction Programs (SF-424A), and the Assurances, Nonconstruction Programs (SF424B) during initial submission of the application. Presently, these are the only forms available to be uploaded through Grants.gov.

There are several additional forms that will be required for applications that are recommended for funding by NOAA program officials to the NOAA Grants Officer. These additional forms are: Department of Commerce Form CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other responsibility Matters; Drug Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying, and if applicable Department of Commerce Form CD-346 Applicant for Funding Assistance (Non-Profits, For-Profits, and Individuals) and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities SF-LLL, will be required in hard copy during the final review process.

When you enter the Grants.gov site, you will find information about submitting an application electronically through the site as well as the hours of operation. We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a DUNS number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). You should allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

Applications must comply with any page limit requirements described in this

notice.

After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number.

NOAA may request that you provide original signatures on forms at a later date.

4. Submission Dates and Times

- a. For electronic submission Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. eastern time on December 1, 2003. Proposals received after that time will not be considered for funding.
- b. For paper submission proposals must be received by 5 p.m. eastern time on December 1, 2003. Proposals received after that time will not be considered for funding. NCBO determines whether an application has been submitted before the deadline by date/time stamping the applications as they are physically received in the NCBO office.

D. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates

Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which the Department of Commerce will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award, or the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by an oversight or cognizant Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date. However, the Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this Program. Applicants with indirect costs above 25 percent may use the amount above the 25 percent level as cost sharing. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

2. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

E. Other Submission Requirements

All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically (through http://www.grants.gov/), however, you may also submit your application in paper format. Applications should be submitted to: Derek Orner, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403. Facsimile transmissions of proposals will not be accepted. The electronic proposals must be submitted via http://www.grants.gov/.

V. Application Review Information

A. Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (15 points)

This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate a knowledge and comprehension of the problem? Is the applicant familiar with related work that is completed or on-going? Does the proposal clearly outline how the project is an integral part of the Chesapeake Bay Fishery Ecosystem Plan (see section I., or http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/fisheries)

2. Technical merit (15 points)

This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program this includes the following questions: Are the objectives defined in the proposal focused? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? What is the likelihood of the proposed activities to improving the general understanding of the Bay's ecosystem? Does the project design include a project evaluation that ensures that the goals and objectives of the project will be met?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (5 points)

This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program this includes the following question: Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects?

4. Project costs (10 points)

This budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind? Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are

directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project?

5. Outreach and education (5 points)

This assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program this includes the following questions: Does the project involve external sharing and communication through peer-reviewed publication and presentation at scientific symposium and conferences? For any projects addressing fishery-independent surveys, does the project provide an adequate description of a timeframe and metadata for collected information?

B. Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications

Once a full application has been received by NCBO, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

2. Technical Review

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo an external technical review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three mail reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (1-50 points) using the criteria provided in Section V.A. This review normally will involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers.

3. Review Panel

The NCBO will convene a review panel consisting of at least three regional experts in the scientific and management aspects of fisheries research from NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. Each member of the panel will review the technical review ranking and comments and individually make recommendations and provide a numerical ranking to the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program Coordinator. No consensus advice will be given by the reviewer panel members.

C. Selection Factors

The Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program Coordinator may, in consultation with NCBO staff, review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panel and make recommendations to the NCBO Director. The average numerical ranking from the review panel will be the primary consideration by the NCBO Director in deciding which of the proposals will be recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer. However, the Director of the

NCBO will select proposals after considering the technical reviews, recommendations of the review panel, and recommendations of the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program Coordinator. The NCBO Director shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon any of the following factors:

- 1. Availability of funding
- 2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
- 3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
- 4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I. and III.2.
- 5. Applicant's prior award performance
- 6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted group

Projects considered for renewal will be evaluated by the Director of the NCBO, in consultation with the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program Coordinator and other NCBO staff, to determine whether to be renewed for funding based upon the advice of the review panel. If there has been satisfactory prior award performance, projects considered for renewal may take priority over new proposals.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the two months following the date given in this announcement that the proposals are due to the NCBO. Funding should begin during spring 2004 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to April 1, 2004, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Principle Investigator of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, then destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). You may obtain a copy of these by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at: www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html.

Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact should furnish sufficient information to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer. Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Please visit the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Research Program website for further information at: http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/fisheries or contact Derek Orner, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403, or by phone at 410-267-5676, or fax to 410-267-5666, or via internet at derek.orner@noaa.gov.